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GLADSTONE.

ONCE more Gladstone is to the fore. His return to power at the head of a coalition between the Irish party and the Liberals constitutes one of the most important political situations the British Empire has ever known. A Parliament composed, for the first time in history, of men elected by the people of every class, is to decide upon the claims of the Irish for distinct government and a separate Parliament—claims put forward by a party able to enforce them, or to throw either Whigs or Tories into opposition.

Gladstone, the friend of Ireland through many arduous struggles, the man who carried the disestablishment of the Irish Church, who re-made the relations between landlord and tenant in Ireland—was opposed in the late elections to the attempted alliance of Parnell and Salisbury. He declared that the way to do justice to Ireland, and yet secure the integrity of the Empire, was to grant as a right, not concede under a threat, what Ireland demands. But the elections went against him, and he instantly rose to the situation. He pronounced it better for the Liberals to do what is right, even under defeat, even because they were compelled to, than to allow the same measure to be accomplished through the unnatural coalition of Tories and Irish patriots. He goes further, however, in yielding to the Irish than many of his own party, and must make a Titanic effort if he brings them up in sufficient numbers to his level. But he is used to contests and to victories; and this much is already certain: whatever the issue of a single battle, the result of the campaign will be the triumph of the principles for which he strives. If Gladstone should die to-morrow, his name would be forever associated with the emancipation of Ireland. He has made it sure.

The great antagonist of aristocracy in England began his career as a Tory and High Churchman. One of Macaulay's early essays was a Whig attack on a manifesto by a young man whom he styled "the rising hope of the stern and unbending Tories." The book

was Gladstone's defense of "The State in its Relations with the Church." To-day, the Tory has passed beyond the position even of the Whigs and left them far to the rear. In both Church and state they are the drag, and he is the leader—as the coach rolls rapidly down the hill of revolution—the Tories say.

His transition has been gradual. No statesman in history has grown more steadily or furnished a finer instance of evolution. For years he was simply the great financier of his party ; he looked little to the revolutionary or progressive politics that were developing around him. But as the old leaders like Sir Robert Peel, Lord Palmerston, and the last Lord Derby, passed away, and Lord Russell became decrepit and finally senile—two younger men stepped into the arena, grander figures in English politics than any since the days of Pitt and Fox, and one at least destined to leave a deeper impress on the history of his country than even those giants of the Napoleonic day.

In 1869, when I first went to England, Disraeli and Gladstone were the acknowledged chiefs of the two great political camps. One had worked his way up by the adroitest use of all the arts of policy and personal address, by attacking his friends and deserting his chiefs at opportune crises, by truckling to the prejudices and trading on the fears of a powerful order ; above all, by the aid of an intense selfishness that was able to perceive its ends from afar, and to subject principle and even passion to its purposes ; the very Mephistopheles and Machiavelli of modern politics ; mocking, insincere, indifferent, so far as others were concerned ; persistent, devoted, all-grasping in his own designs ; grand in his power to compel a race that he despised and an aristocracy that despised him, to do his bidding. The other was a religious zealot, an intense thinker, and yet a practical man, full of love for the Church, and saturated with scholarly veneration for the past, with all the inborn reverence of an Englishman for whatever is established, and the awe of a middle-class man for the aristocracy—yet impelled by the combined force of his own energies and ambitions, and the tremendous vigor of his ever-expanding intellectual convictions, as well as by the influence of the iconoclastic and reforming spirit of the time, that penetrated and finally permeated him, till he turned upon the institutions he had loved the best, and, like one inspired by the Fates, attacked and destroyed what he had been all his life upholding and defending.

He was at the head of a brilliant band of ardent thinkers and earnest patriots, some of them, doubtless, crude or doctrinaire, impractical and over-zealous ; others inclining to the extreme of caution, yet representing the element in English statesmanship which at that time had accomplished whatever had been achieved by or for the English people since the downfall of the Stuarts.

The first gage of battle was the Irish Church. Gladstone was made prime minister that he might overthrow that relic of the ancient alliance of Church and state which he had once written a book to defend. The religious enthusiast, the early apostle of Establishment, led the Whigs and the Radicals in their assault on the Church, while the political adventurer, the renegade from Liberalism, the foreigner in blood and belief, was the champion of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, of the aristocracy, and in reality of the court. Their rivalry lasted till the death of Beaconsfield. Only one of these men could be prime minister so long as both were living.

Gladstone's convictions, his enemies say, have always been easily changed when the motive was strong ; and it must be admitted that his conversions have often been seasonable. Any one who had studied his career could easily have predicted his course in the Irish emergency. He was certain to yield when the Irish became irresistible, to lead those to victory whose victory he himself had opposed. Circumstances, however, make potent arguments. When the political necessity is pressing, the political vision becomes clearer ; and emergency often compels to a course that if the emergency did not exist might be unadvisable. It should be remembered, too, that Gladstone's progress has always been in one direction. After he once set out toward Liberalism he has never been a backslider. When he could not proceed as far as he wished he has neither retreated nor recanted. Whatever the inducement, whether of hope or fear, he never returns to his idols.

He has been accused of a jesuitical tendency, of a disposition to find arguments in favor of acts after the acts have been performed, and it is certain that when good logic was not at his disposal he has sometimes resorted to sophistries unworthy of the preacher of purity and Christianity infused into politics. Two notable instances of this occurred while I was in England. One was generally known as the Ewelme scandal.

The living of Ewelme is in the gift of the prime minister, but

a provision of law requires the incumbent to be a member of the University of Oxford. Mr. Gladstone had a favorite who was a Cambridge man, and so that this clergyman might receive the coveted preferment, he was first made a member of Oxford and then immediately promoted to the position reserved for Oxford men. The proceeding provoked much harsh criticism, and the Christian statesman certainly laid himself open to the charge of evading the law for personal purposes.

The other case affected the judiciary. Only judges who have sat in certain courts are eligible for appointment to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, a court of appeal of the highest dignity and consequence. Its members must be selected from the bench, so that their judicial experience may tell in their new position. But Mr. Gladstone appointed his attorney general, Sir Robert Collier, to a judgeship for two days, and then bestowed on him the preferment intended exclusively for judges. These acts speak for themselves. His enemies not unnaturally proclaimed that the man who talked so loudly of truth and purity had poisoned the fountains of both religion and justice, and carried his favoritism in spite of law into the Church and the courts.

These traits may not be omitted from the portrait, but it is pleasant to turn to other features of his character and other incidents of his career. The long list of his achievements in behalf of progress should not be forgotten in America. During his first two administrations Gladstone accomplished more than any other English statesman since Cromwell has even attempted in the way of overthrowing abuses and reforming institutions. He not only disestablished the Irish Church and renovated the system of Irish tenancy; he introduced the ballot into England, he abolished purchase in the army, he offered education to all, he brought about the recent extension of the franchise. He has opened the way for the admission of the poorest and humblest Englishman to the highest political rights, and made inevitable the modification and eventual abolition of the firmest-rooted wrongs and the unfairest privileges. Whenever equality, not only of position, but of opportunity, is established in England, Gladstone will be looked upon as the John the Baptist, the fore-runner of the Messiah.

In foreign matters he has championed the oppressed of many countries. More than a quarter of a century ago he directed attention to the atrocities of King Bomba of Naples, and assisted

in precipitating the downfall of that royal monster, and in this way pioneered the coming of the Kingdom of Italy. His eloquent utterances after the Bulgarian massacres, the tremendous invectives he poured on Turkish depravity, are not yet forgotten, and undoubtedly were the chief weapon that struck the cynical friend of the Turk, Lord Beaconsfield, from power.

For in foreign affairs Gladstone has never hesitated to manifest a spirit almost unexampled in the statesmen of any country or time. Hardly ever has republican or monarchist dared to set his country right when she was in the wrong, before the world ; to confess for her the wrong, to withdraw her from a false position, to emulate the gospel spirit, and carry Christianity into politics on so grand a scale. The retrocession of the Ionian Islands, the similar policy in South Africa, the determination not to do evil in India that good might come, the refusal to resist the encroachments of Russia by perfidious or iniquitous means, or to support the Turk in evil practices because those practices might tend to the benefit of England—these are remarkable instances of what I mean. The submission to arbitration of the question whether England had done wrong in the Alabama matter—was a step of the same character ; while the expression of regret for the injury inflicted was a humiliation that no statesman ever before in history put upon his country willingly. Some will call the act sublime, but there were many Englishmen who considered it pusillanimous. It was not pusillanimous, for it was not extorted by fear ; and it tended to produce a cordial sentiment between the two countries that nothing else could have evoked.

Gladstone went through a storm of obloquy and condemnation on this account. I was in England and could watch his course. Public sentiment was so violent that at times the representatives of the United States felt its influence in their personal and social relations. And when the famous “Indirect Claims” were presented, the nations stood on the verge of war. Americans at home hardly appreciated the intensity of the British sentiment, but those of us in England, especially if we had access to official or important circles, knew the depth of the feeling. The press and Parliament were almost unanimous in their bitterness and their unfairness. But Mr. Gladstone never swerved from his intention or his effort to carry out what he had promised. His loyalty and the skillful diplomacy of Secretary Fish and General Schenck, which

has never been recognized as it deserved, brought the two peoples through a crisis of no ordinary character.

The foreign policy of Mr. Gladstone has never met the general approbation of his countrymen : his genius does not shine in the sphere of diplomacy. Certainly the result in Egypt was not one to be proud of. The bombardment of Alexandria was a reproach to the English nation and an outrage on the civilization of the age—punished in the same region and the same decade by the disasters of the Soudan and the massacre of Gordon. In each of his earlier administrations Mr. Gladstone so mismanaged his foreign relations that they undoubtedly contributed in each instance to his downfall. He offended unnecessarily the spirit of the English nation, humiliated its pride, and seemed at least to ignore its interests.

And this cannot be attributed to his lieutenants. Though he had at the head of his foreign department a man utterly without force or originality, it was not Lord Granville's fault that the tangle was so bad. Gladstone is always master in his own cabinet. He controls and directs absolutely. His will is law. He dictates the general policy and decides every detail of importance, and his subordinates must yield or leave. His party too, has followed, as well as his cabinet. No man has more absolutely swayed the nation when he was at its head. It was he who determined on disestablishment in Ireland, and arbitration with the United States ; on peace or war with Russia, and Africa, and Egypt, and America. It is he who made the coalition with Parnell ; it is he who decided that Ireland must have a Parliament. Not Bismarck, not the first Napoleon, was more of an autocrat.

His ablest subalterns are proud to serve under him, though they scowl at any other chief. When, after the Liberal defeat in 1874, he retired for awhile from the leadership of the party—to a man they besought him to remain. And when upon his refusal, Lord Hartington was given the reins, Gladstone was still a disturbing element. Whenever for a night he appeared in Parliament, the nominal chief at once went into eclipse ; and when at last his party returned to power, the country would hear of no one but him for prime minister. The Queen opposed him, but made herself and her weakness ridiculous by the opposition.

His personal popularity is prodigious, but like all great men he provokes the most violent animosities ; not only among those

who know him individually, but in the country at large. He is hated by the mass of the aristocracy with a bitterness almost unexampled, but very natural, for with a true instinct they feel and know that he is their greatest foe. Whether he means or wishes it, or no, he hurts them more than any million of men beside. He once said of them: "The Lords are up in a balloon;" elevated above the ordinary world, but unable to observe or affect the course of affairs. Another time he declared that he should think once, he should think twice, he should think three times, before he would abolish the House of Lords; but if the third occasion passed, he did not say what his course would be. And these were the utterances of a man who had it in his power to fulfill his threats. More than once he has compelled the Lords to do his bidding by the menace of adding to their number or lessening their hereditary privileges. When they obstinately resisted the abolition of purchase in the army—although the measure had passed the House of Commons and was unmistakably approved by the nation—Gladstone revived a disused prerogative of the Crown, and forced the unwilling Queen to declare purchase abolished by royal warrant—a weapon that had not been resorted to for two hundred years. He strained the Constitution but he conquered the Lords. The last great difference between him and them was upon the extension of the franchise. In this instance the peers yielded in time; but had they held out, he would undoubtedly have shaken the very foundation of their position as legislators.

This single man, who threatens and assails one of the ancient orders of the state, who places himself in antagonism with an entire aristocracy, who forces a still powerful class to abandon its privileges and trample on its prejudices, is of course the object of their profoundest antipathy. But not only the aristocracy themselves; all the mass of their followers, all the prejudiced Tories of the middle and lower class, above all those of the press or the literary sort—detest the name of Gladstone. To compensate—about two-thirds of the English nation adore him. No one in England in my time could evoke the enthusiasm that followed him.

All this is the magic of genius as well as the might of will; it comes from the combination of intellect and character; the belief in his intention, the knowledge of his achievements, the sympathy with his efforts, the magnetism of his presence and personality, the authority of a born leader of men.

Of his natural gifts eloquence is the most easily recognized. His oratory is fiery and convincing by turns, but more often fascinating and persuading. His lucidity of speech, though he is neither terse nor often epigrammatic, is so wonderful that he is famous for the charm he flings about the most abstruse questions of finance. His long involved sentences never weary, are never obscure, and always lead up to some lofty sentiment that either excites the imagination or touches the heart.

Like most men of genius he exerts a personal fascination that is irresistible. His conversation is seductive in its interest. You cannot turn away from it. He holds you like the Ancient Mariner, till he "tells his tale." I was once asked to meet him at dinner, when there was no American minister in England. It was at the house of Lord Halifax, one of his colleagues in the cabinet, who had corresponded with me the winter before, while I had a room at the White House; and whose letters had been avowedly written for me to show to President Grant. At the date of the dinner the discussions of the Treaty of Washington were at their height, and there were grave doubts of the success of the negotiations. Lord Halifax asked me to meet Mr. Gladstone so that I might convey his opinions direct to the President. The prime minister talked half an hour with me alone on the subject of the treaty, and under these circumstances he naturally wished to impress me very fully with his ideas. I saw him therefore to unusual advantage, and was never more impressed with the power of a man to expound and illustrate and enforce his views by conversation. Afterward he continued the talk on other themes, and discussed the difference between the British and the American constitutions, the permanency of the systems and institutions of both countries; and was as brilliant and as fascinating as his reputation had led me to anticipate. I remember his saying that the American constitution was the most perfect ever written by man, which as a good Englishman he could admit, for the British pride themselves on the fact that their constitution is unwritten. He thought Americans had a great advantage in "elbow-room," as he called it; and that our institutions could not be said to have stood their severest test till the United States were as crowded as England is to-day.

On another occasion, some years later, he was good enough to ask me to breakfast. It was the morning of a day when there was

to be a great debate, which he was to lead ; the result might decide the fate of a momentous measure, and either retain him in power or overthrow him. He had at table a party of ten, only two of them ladies, and one of these his daughter. Among the other guests were a distinguished divine ; an ecclesiastical architect or architectural ecclesiastic, I forget which ; the liberal son of a duke, a member of the House of Commons, and so on. We sat at breakfast an hour and a half, but not a word was said about politics, not a reference was made to the debate in the evening. The principal subject discussed was the Revision of the New Testament which had just been given to the world. The prime minister was extremely interested in this theme. He is learned in his Greek, as every one knows, and quoted the original text freely. He was entirely opposed to the Revision, and offered to lay five pounds that it would never be authorized to be read in the churches. I was amused to hear him offer a wager and on such a theme, and said so to his daughter. She told me she had never known him make a bet but once before, and that was that Disraeli would be a peer before himself.

This versatility of attention displayed at such a moment was characteristic of his genius. His information is various and his learning catholic, as well as profound ; his power to discuss the most different themes astounding. When he was for a while out of office and nominally in retirement, the activity of his mind was incessant. He wrote pamphlets on the Vatican decrees, published whole volumes on Homer and the Youth of the World (*Juventus Mundi*) ; and debated artistic, antiquarian, ecclesiastical, and purely literary subjects in half the periodicals in England. He was a lay reader at morning prayer in the parish church at Hawarden, and a hewer of wood in the park immediately afterward ; and he answered himself every post-card that any one chose to send him. Finally, came his wonderful attack on the Tory foreign policy, which tumbled Lord Beaconsfield headlong from office and reputation, and indeed terminated his career.

Mr. Gladstone's position in regard to the American Rebellion was one of the mistakes of his life. He has had the courage to admit the mistake, and the magnanimity to seek to atone for it. He thought that the right of secession was implied, if not admitted, in the American Constitution, and like most Englishmen he failed to see the reasons that would have made the admission of

that right practically impossible even if it had been logically tenable. Even after his famous apology to the American people—"Kin beyond Sea"—I heard him declare that he still could not see that Jefferson Davis was wrong. This is what I should call the doctrinaire side of his mind, which disappears or is hidden completely in his practical contests in English politics. No man can put abstract notions more entirely aside than he, or so envelop them in a cloud of explanatory comment as to make them invisible or innocuous whenever it is desirable for his purposes.

He is, indeed, a curious development of the English type ; a strange outgrowth from the Anglo-Saxon root. With his ardent religious faith, apparently never disturbed in this age of scientific and intelligent unbelief, with his lofty Christian sentiment, carried, however, more often into foreign than domestic politics ; with the extraordinary indirectness of his mind in some of its workings, as manifested in the Ewelme and Collier affairs—he is in many ways as un-English a representative as it is possible to imagine. Intellectually, I have sometimes thought him more like an American or a Frenchman. His keen penetration, his logical acuteness, his abstract philosophy remind one almost of Emerson at times, while in profundity and power of generalization, he is not unlike Montesquieu. From one point of view the most transcendental and unpractical of statesmen, yet when he descends from the lofty heights where he evolves his theories of arbitration and religion, and doing good to one's enemies—to the arena of actual, daily politics, no one is shrewder, more politic, more adroit ; no one sees the situation more clearly, and—far more important and rarer quality—no one is readier to adapt himself to the situation that he perceives ; no one knows how to hit harder or parry better, or understands more exactly the strategy of important situations and the tactics of significant details. No one has carried great measures through greater difficulties ; against the opposition not only of avowed enemies, but of loyal friends ; against the influence of the Queen, the dislike of high society, the rooted prejudices often of the English people, the disapproval occasionally of the best and soberest minds. Yet he marches on in a career of successive triumphs. He defeats the heir to one of the oldest dukedoms, in his family borough ; he forces his colleagues to the support of measures they detest, he compels the acquiescence of the court, he arouses and sometimes justifies the wildest appre-

hensions of his enemies. He is, at the close of his career, the most important and imposing figure in English politics ; the leader in the army of progress before the world ; the champion of the people in a land where they still need one ; the ally of a down-trodden sister country to whom he holds out a hand to assist her to rise. High-minded and high-purposed ; with his faults, like all that are human, but battling always against wrong or in favor of the weak, he is indeed the model knight-errant, with even a Quixotic dash of romance in his temperament ; but able to support as well as to attack, to defend as well as to destroy. This veteran of nearly seventy-seven, dashing against his enemies with the vigor of youth, leading the common people of England whom he has raised to a position and power they have never known till now ; urging them to make the first use of that power to undo the wrongs of centuries in Ireland, offering to the men who had just dealt him the severest blow, the justice that they claim,—this man may not extort from the aristocrats of Europe the approbation he deserves, but Americans and democrats, believers in the people and friends of the people everywhere, cannot but wish him well in his last encounter with vested wrong.

ADAM BADEAU.